

## Unconditional Love in the Face of Hatred: Applications of a Timeless Teaching

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### Abstract

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Love is one of the most discussed virtues in theological and philosophical literature. In spite of centuries of teaching on the singular power of unconditional love, there are few examples of its actual practice in the public sphere. The world does not lack for philosophies and methods of social change, but lasting successes are few. The most effective movements (e.g., those led by Mohandes K. Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King, Jr.) were pulsed by a philosophy or theology that emphasized the power of love, inner nobility, and the innate dignity of humankind. These movements stand the test of time because they met the ultimate challenge of sustained practice of unconditional love in the face of hatred, without lapsing into naïveté and wishful thinking. The article explores this challenge in light of a recent terrorist attack, drawing on firsthand interviews with esteemed spiritual leaders from around the world.

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### Introduction

On December 2, 2015, a young couple, Tashfeen Malik, 29, and Seyd Rizwan Farook, 28, left their 6-month-old daughter at home, suited up in black tactical gear, loaded a rented black SUV with assault weapons and pipe bombs, drove a few miles to the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California (USA), and gunned down Farook's co-workers who were gathered for a holiday party. It was a cold and calculated mass killing. Some of the people killed had recently attended a baby shower for the couple, giving gifts to Malik and Farook and well-wishes for the baby. The killers left pipe bombs to be exploded by remote control. The shooting left 14 dead, 22 wounded. "Carnage." "Unspeakable." These were the words spoken from the first responding officer who entered the killing room, still fresh with the smell of gunpowder. At the time of the killing, the female shooter, Malik, posted allegiance to the leader of ISIS on Facebook. This attack was called the "largest terrorist attack on U.S. soil since 9/11" a designation which lasted only a few months until another massacre occurred, at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, also carried out by a shooter influenced by ISIS.

The San Bernardino terrorist attack had a personal impact. The shooters lived down the street from me. It happened, ironically, just as I was drafting an introduction to the book, *The Power of Love*. The shooting evoked the timeless question, contemplated by philosophers and theologians throughout history: How is it possible to practice unconditional love in the face of evil? Philosophical concepts and theological principles tend to remain theoretical constructs until they are applied to real life. Love is one of the most discussed and lauded virtues. The world's great religions teach the importance of unconditional love. In many traditions, God is said to be Love, and in other traditions, the names or qualities for God (Mercy, Compassion, Truth, Patience, Loving Kindness, etc.) are related to love. Love as an ideal, therefore, is everywhere in religion, philosophy, and theology. Yet, how is this ideal possible in the context of such cold-hearted killing? This article gives an account of answers to that question, based on interviews with distinguished religious leaders from diverse traditions and cultures.

### Facing the Truth

A first step in the practice of unconditional love is to acknowledge the existence of destructive forces. Unconditional love does not bury its head in the sand. It is fearless and faces the truth of a situation.

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For example, survivors of childhood abuse know that responsibility for abuse lies not only with the perpetrator but also with members of a household who keep their head in the sand and, by their denial, fail to protect a child. Love and truth go together. In the public sphere, Mahatma Gandhi based his movement to end British imperialism in India on *satyagraha*, which means "holding onto truth." The *satyagrahi* a practitioner of the *satyagraha* philosophy commits to purifying mind, speech and action of all violence, through rigorous self-honesty and inner discipline. Only then, having purified their own consciousness, *satyagrahis* see clearly into the nature of an evil situation. Since correct insight reveals that evil stems from ignorance, the *satyagrahis'* stance toward the people promulgating the oppressive system is not one of enmity or blame, but of unconditional love. Theologically, Gandhi's approach affirmed the innate dignity of all people. It was rooted in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Indian scripture which he called the "infallible guide of conduct" for his life (Gandhi, 1997, 36). Philosophically, unconditional love does not avoid negative conditions, for even negativity is part and parcel of the oneness of love. Rather than avoidance, *real love* loves regardless of the conditions.

In the case of the terrorist attack, facing the truth led to visiting the place where the shooting occurred. The day before the shooting, this intersection was unremarkable another traffic light on the way to work. Overnight, it was transformed into a memorial site with candles, flowers, prayers, flags, and pictures of the deceased. It became a sacred site that held the longing and pain of the human heart. People need a place to express the heart. Honor the dignity of life. Reaffirm hope. Unite with others, rather than divide. Light a candle. Say a prayer. Kneel and ask for mercy. Remember those who have passed. Reach out and hold the hand of a friend. Weep quietly. At the memorial site, there were 14 American flags for the 14 individuals shot to death by the terrorists. Visiting the site revealed the loss of individuals who were loved and admired by their unique communities. Ironically, one of the victims was a Christian woman who had immigrated from Iran two decades ago to escape Islamic extremism, only to be gunned down by Islamic extremists here in the U.S. One of the men killed is remembered as a hero. He saved the life of a friend by covering her with his own body, taking the shots so she didn't have to. "I got you," he told her. A young woman among the dead was the same age as the shooters and was admired for her dedication to helping others. How to explain the difference? One young person was on a path of loving, the others a path of killing. Another person killed was a gay man, known as a kind-hearted person and free spirit to his many friends; his death evoked this prayer written at the memorial site: "On behalf of the LGBT community, we offer our prayers and love to our human family. Violence is NEVER the Word of God. Rest in Peace."

A short distance away from the memorial site was the townhome where Farook and Malik lived. Facing the truth also required a visit there, to reckon with the fact that they, too, were victims of the hatefulness they executed. When authorities broke into the house, they found poignant evidence of a double life. The couple's garage housed an arsenal of ammunition and bomb-making equipment, alongside the signs of a passion for tinkering with cars. Baby gear and gun cleaner were next to each other in the kitchen. The baby crib stood in a room that doubled as an office with computer and document shredder. In the trash can were electronic devices, smashed to eliminate incriminating evidence. The couple had evidently planned to carry out further mass shooting and bomb attacks after the initial "soft target." Why else all the ammunition? Their SUV was loaded with 1400 rifle rounds and 200 handgun rounds at the time they were intercepted and killed in a shootout with law enforcement. Where were they going? We may never know. Farook, working as a county health inspector, had seen inside many local schools and facilities. It was the perfect job for scoping out targets for attack.

The shooters' townhome looked very different from the memorial site. It was boarded up with no sign of life. There were no flowers, candles, or flags placed on the steps. No banners to affirm hope. No posters with heartfelt prayers for the deceased. No expressions of sorrow for the loss of their young lives. There was only dismay. And a chill up the spine. One wondered, "How could they have done this? Living so close, plotting to kill, and no one knew?" The photographs of Farook and Malik as teenagers show a light in the eyes, the hopefulness of youth, and a certain congeniality and softness. In the recent photographs, however, this inner light had been extinguished. They looked blank and hardened. Joyless. What had happened to them? In the recent photographs, there was a coldness in their eyes. Something very menacing had taken possession of them. Farook and Malik were indeed the "killers." But were they not also the victims of hatred? There were 16 people not just 14 killed by hatred in this tragedy.

It would be easy to see them as the "enemy," but according to the spiritual leaders I interviewed, the real enemy is *ignorance*. In their different ways, these spiritual leaders recapitulated the view of Socrates that human beings are intrinsically innocent and do things out of ignorance.

In any given moment, human beings choose to do what they *perceive to be the good*. The problem is that they are unable to tell the *true* good from the *illusory* good. People are not innately evil, but rather, they are lost in a sea of illusion without a compass. Any self-honest person can look back over life and see the times when they *thought* they were doing something that would lead to happiness or the common good, only to realize after the fact that the action was rooted in illusion and ended up being detrimental to oneself and others. The terrorists were under the *extreme* illusion that they would achieve their goal by killing others.

### **The Power of Love**

His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, is one of the world's most highly regarded lamas and head of the Karma Kagyu lineage within Tibetan Buddhism. When I interviewed him at his home base at Gyuto Monastery in India, he spoke on the power of "pure love" in the face of suffering: "When pure love is in us, we are seeing their suffering, we are seeing the other as a part of ourselves, and we feel ourselves to be a part of the other. For that reason, when we witness their pain or their happiness, we experience it as our own pain and our own happiness. And when this basis is there, the basis that comes from love, then naturally their pain becomes unbearable for us to witness and we must act to do something about it."

The power of this kind of love was evident in the wake of the shooting. Hatred did not win the day. Love took the form of affirming the value and beauty of life. Even among strangers, there were continual expressions of empathy, kindness, friendship, looking out for each other, open-heartedness, compassion, listening, receptivity, gratitude, hope, welcoming, forgiveness, affection, generosity, and appreciation. It is a timeless teaching in religious scriptures that love is more powerful than hatred. As the *Dhammapada* says, "For hate is not conquered by hate. Hate is conquered by love. This is the eternal law."

What if the hatred hits on a very personal level? The Karmapa told me that a friend of his was recently murdered. Love means to forgive the one who killed, yet not excuse the action. It is very possible to see that the person who does the killing is actually an object of greater compassion than the victim of the killing, because it's an action done out of great ignorance. Looking at the action, the action was clearly wrong, it was a mistake, and there's no way around that fact. There is no excusing of the action. But the person himself can be forgiven.

When His Holiness visited my home institution of University of Redlands in early 2015 just a few months before the shooting a student asked him how to view terrorists such as those of the Islamic State. "With compassion," he said. We may have an initial reaction of anger and want revenge because the violence is so "horrific." But we can take a breath, step back from the strong emotional reaction, and see things from a "broader perspective" made possible by compassion. Compassion is born when we see that the terrorists are essentially "brainwashed from an early age." They are helplessly brought up to believe in a violent ideology and forms of behavior through "no agency of their own."

Remembering these comments from the Karmapa, I sought to learn about Farook and Malik in order to cultivate compassion by understanding their circumstances. In the statements from the F.B.I., it seems that by the time they met online at a Muslim dating site, in 2013, Malik and Farook were already "radicalized" by an ideology that condemned individual freedom and religious tolerance as "evil." They had become entrained to the belief that those who have different value systems deserve to die. Farouk and Malik lived here in Redlands and kept to themselves. She never drove, and even close family members say they did not see her face because she wore a *niqab*, covering all but her eyes. Farouk told his friend he was impressed with a woman so devoted to her religion that she would take on the strictest adherence. He expressed disdain for American culture and found it hostile to his religion.

Farouk and Malik were devoted, committed, and loyal but in the direction of death and hatred rather than love. How did the generally positive traits of devotion and loyalty become so mal-aligned? A human life can be devoted to love and beauty, or it can be devoted to hatred and destruction. A chisel can be used to carve sacred Buddhist art, or it can be used to destroy the world's largest standing Buddhas. In the very same week that the terrorist killing happened, two antique Iranian rugs were delivered to my house, inherited from my parents. The irony was stunning. Both paths the rug weaver and the terrorist require years of intense dedication and training. Yet one path is devoted to beauty, and the other to destruction. What determines the direction of a human being's life? It is precisely this element of free will to choose between love and hatred that makes the earthly plane uniquely beneficial for spiritual evolution. Each choice we make on a daily basis sets the direction of our life.

Our life direction is a result of all that we have said "Yes" to along the way. According to several of the spiritual leaders I interviewed, the choosing of "good" (love, compassion, forgiveness) requires the presence of "evil," within an environment of free will. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama sums up this view: "With no enemy, how do we learn tolerance or forgiveness?" (2005). This world, the spiritual leaders taught, is not meant to be a heavenly paradise but a place of maximal opportunity for spiritual evolution. The presence of suffering facilitates spiritual liberation for those who see it as such an opportunity. Scriptures say that God is Love and that the goal of human life is to love as God loves unconditionally. For example, in the Christian scripture, it is said: "God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him (I John 4:16)." It is one thing to love one's own family or one's own culture and religion, but quite another to love what is unfamiliar and, especially, to love what is hostile. It is the *all-inclusiveness* of love that is so demanding. Love is not the same as dependency and attachment. People say, "I want love," without realizing that love has no conditions to it. *Real* love is unconditional and does not depend on the actions or responses of others.

Elder Pavlos is the senior monk at St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt, the oldest continually operating Christian monastery in the world. He was featured in *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer*, a documentary film on the centuries-old prayer practice in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. When Father Pavlos of Sinai spoke to me, he was emphatic that genuine love has no room for judgment because we do not see as God sees. God is omniscient; most human beings see only their own shadow. We are not "forced to love our enemy," he said, but if we do so, this step forward benefits not only ourselves but the whole human family. "Loving the enemy" is no mere spiritual platitude. It is an act of inner courage with major consequences for oneself and the world. Father Pavlos explained to me,

"The great ascetic writer Abba Dorotheos of Gaza said, "Even when you see a person sin with your own eyes, never judge him because you don't see the struggle he waged before he fell into that sin." God is Love. And God who is Love sees what we do not see. God sees how the person struggled before he fell into sin. God will place a great deal of emphasis on this struggle, and God judges him according to the struggle, not just on what we saw. For we saw only the outcome, the last stage, and nothing that went on beforehand."

Elder Pavlos said that the monks at St. Catherine's monastery pray for those that hate them. Their monastery is located in the Egyptian desert, and not all the neighbors are friendly. He told me, "For us, genuine love as Christ taught it, and He himself lived it, means that we don't just love those who love us but also those who hate us. On the cross, our Christ prayed for those who crucified him and this is the point to which we also must reach. It is easy to love those who love you. But the one who doesn't love you and hates you, it requires effort to love him. And so the very greatest expression of genuine love is to love the one who doesn't love you but hates you. It's a long road and difficult an uphill one road. But this is the true path to genuine love."

### **The Transformative Impact of Love in the World**

The spiritual leaders interviewed in this article emphasized that love is not weakness but *real power*, even in the political sphere. When people truly say "Yes" to love, it changes them and, by implication, also changes the world. Love means the letting go of fear, greed, resentment, self-pity, judgment of self and others, and demands on others. Love is infinitely more powerful than hatred and brings a release of vital and creative energy that was not there before. What had previously not been possible, with love, becomes so. This is obvious in the life of Gandhi. It was through the power of love that Gandhi brought British Imperialism to its knees, with truth as his only weapon. This means that love is not merely a philosophic ideal but also of great practical importance for the betterment of humankind. In his groundbreaking book, *Power vs. Force*, David R. Hawkins explains the difference between "power" and "force" and why Gandhi's movement was successful:

"Why is it that force always eventually succumbs to power?...On examination, we will see that power arises from meaning. It has to do with motive, and it has to do with principle. Power is always associated with that which supports the significance of life itself. It appeals to that in human nature which we call noble, in contrast to force, which appeals to that which we call crass. Power appeals to that which uplifts, dignifies, and ennobles. Force must always be justified, whereas power requires no justification. Force is associated with the partial, power with the whole.

"If we analyze the nature of force, it becomes readily apparent why it must always succumb to power; this is in accordance with one of the basic laws of physics. Because force automatically creates counter-force, its effect is limited by definition. We could say that force is a movement. It goes from here to there (or tries to) against opposition. Power, on the other hand, stands still. It is like a standing field that does not move.

Gravity itself, for instance, does not move against anything. "Its power moves all objects within its field, but the gravity field itself does not move. Force always moves against something, whereas power does not move against anything. Force is intrinsically incomplete and therefore has to constantly be fed energy. Power is total and complete in and of itself and requires nothing from outside of itself. It makes no demands; it has no needs. Because force has an insatiable appetite, it constantly consumes. Power, in contrast, energizes, gives forth, supplies, and supports. Power gives life and energy. Force takes these away. We notice that power is associated with compassion and makes us feel positively about ourselves. Force is associated with judgmentalism and tends to make us feel badly about ourselves.

"Force always creates counterforce; its effect is to polarize rather than to unify. Polarization always implies conflict; its cost, therefore, is always high. Because force incites polarization, it inevitably produces a win/lose dichotomy; and because somebody always loses, enemies are always created. Constantly faced with enemies, force requires constant defense. Defensiveness is invariably costly, whether in the marketplace, politics, or international affairs. In looking for the source of power, we have noted that it is associated with meaning and that this meaning has to do with the significance of life itself..."

"Every civilization is characterized by native principles. If the principles of a civilization are noble, it succeeds; if they are selfish, it falls. As a term, "principles" may sound abstract, but the consequences of principle are quite concrete.... True power, then, emanates from consciousness itself; what we see is a visible manifestation of the invisible ([1995] 2012, 153-154)."

Hawkins notes that Gandhi's philosophical and theological principle of "the intrinsic dignity of man and his right to freedom, sovereignty, and self-determination" was the source of power that led to the unravelling of British imperialism in India. Otherwise, how could have a mere 90-pound man wearing only his *dhobi* bring down the largest empire at that time, which ruled two-thirds of the world? Similarly, Hawkins says, the foundation of the United States of America was based on the principle that "all men are equal by virtue of the divinity of their creation, and human rights are intrinsic to human creation and therefore inalienable." If the spiritual principles of a civilization are undermined, the source of true power erodes and the material unravelling of that civilization is not far behind.

Unconditional love inevitably arises from the principle of the innate dignity of all human beings regardless of race, religion, class, etc. Gandhi famously treated the so-called "untouchables" with equal dignity. Their dignity, he held, derived from the Divinity that had created them. Gandhi insisted that any form of violence even on the level of thought and speech had to be purified. He trained his *satyagrahis* to be aligned with love, nonviolence, selflessness, and truth, which are sources of great power. Gandhi never treated the British people as his "enemy"; rather, he saw the oppressive systems (imperialism and caste) as the "enemy." Through the practice of *satyagraha*, eliminating all violence within consciousness and action, love shines forth. Gandhi writes: "When all violence subsides in the human heart, the state which remains is love. It is not something we have to acquire; it is always present, and needs only to be uncovered. This is our real nature, not merely to love one person here, another there, but to be love itself" (Gandhi, 1997, 53). Hawkins concludes ([1995] 2012, 174): "Gandhi demonstrated, for the world to witness, the power of selflessness versus the force of self-interest. (The same principle has also been demonstrated quite dramatically in South Africa by Nelson Mandela.)"

Nelson Mandela showed what is possible when love replaces hate in a violent political environment that offered no hope for resolution. A whole country was transformed into something that had never before been imagined: the co-creation of a new democracy by black and white leaders, with the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a process to heal through the past decades of racial hatred. Mandela underwent a profound inner transformation during his 27 years in prison, detailed in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Having once been a tribal fighter, he emerged with a unifying humanistic vision that saw both the oppressed and the oppressor as prisoners of hatred. Like Gandhi, Nelson Mandela saw the "enemy" as a system of hatred, not the people who ran it. He was committed to a win-win resolution for the whole of South Africa, refusing all options that offered temporary partisan or personal advantage. Mandela learned the power of love through very difficult circumstances. The apartheid government of South Africa viewed him as a traitor and sentenced him to prison for 27 years. He entered prison an angry man, yet came out a changed man. Paradoxically, it was in prison that Nelson Mandela was liberated from the prison of a militant mindset, most of it in the confines of a seven-by-nine-foot cell.

In that cell, Mandela went through a transformation of consciousness. What happened to him? What can be learned by his account? In his interviews with Oprah Winfrey, he said that the prison term allowed him the opportunity to achieve "the most difficult task in life, which is to change *oneself*." He reiterates a core philosophical idea that self-knowledge is the root of all knowledge, as stated in the Delphi axiom, "Know thyself." Before going to jail, Mandela explained, he did not have time for self-reflection. He was politically active around the clock, and this activist life led to physical, emotional and intellectual fatigue. He had not taken time to look at himself. In the prison cell, he said, "I had time to think. I had a clear view of my past and present, and I found that my past left much to be desired, both in regard to my relations with other humans and in developing personal worth." He realized that he had been ungrateful and thoughtless regarding the family members and other people who had helped him in his life. He had been self-absorbed and arrogant. Prison taught him how everything depended upon the support of others, and he experienced *ubuntu*, the African proverb, "We are people through other people." This proverb underscores the interdependence inherent in life. Mandela also educated himself in prison by reading great literature, the scriptures of the world's religions, and working to develop his "powers of thinking and discipline." Prison took away his arrogance but not his dignity. "In my younger days, I was arrogant - jail helped me to get rid of it. I did nothing but make enemies because of my arrogance" (Mandela, 2001).

In his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela gives the recipe for transforming hatred and despair into the power of love. He puts the philosophical and theological principles of his Christian faith and indigenous spirituality into practice. First, he does not deny the pain of racism or try to cover over the wounds: "The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people." Second, he does not nurse the wound or cling to the past. Rather, he looks for the hidden treasure within the painful history: "The decades of oppression and brutality had another, unintended effect" it "produced" the "great heroes" of the struggle for democracy.... Perhaps it requires such depth of oppression to create such heights of character.... Time and again, I have seen men and women risk and give their lives for an idea... I learned that courage [is] not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it..." Third, he refuses the deadly allure of self-pity and resentment. "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die" is his well-known statement. Fourth, Mandela holds onto the belief that "deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity." He kept his eye on the glimmers of goodness in those who were against him. Even in the severity of the prison, when he was pushed to his limits by the cruelty of certain guards and pointless regimens, he would "see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second"; that glimmer reassured him that "man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished." Fifth, he gave up the blame game. He understood that people cannot help how they have been conditioned. If they can learn to hate, they can learn also to love. He writes, "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (Mandela, 1995, 622).

By 1990, South Africa was ripe for change, and Mandela was internally prepared to be a leader. Due to international pressure, the apartheid government released Mandela and his cohorts in 1990. The government leaders had tried many times to seduce Mandela with special favors for his own release, but he refused all options that offered only personal advantage. He was committed to *ubuntu*, "We are people through other people," as a matter of ethical principle, and he did not fall into the trap of "the end justifies the means," an illusion which hijacks many activists into thinking they can use hostile means of protest to achieve peace. Mandela was a tireless advocate of the idea that common principles are more important than individual personalities. A leader should be fearless in the face of difficulty, yet humble in receiving honors. As he told Oprah Winfrey, "When there is danger, a good leader takes the front line; but when there is celebration, a good leader stays in the back of the room" (Mandela, 2001).

Mandela emerged as a leader for all of South Africa, not just black Africans. Although he had entered prison full of anger and bitterness, he emerged with his hand extended to the white leaders in a spirit of common ground: the creation of the first democratic government in Africa. He had been a militant tribal fighter for one side, yet he became a leader for all sides. "During those long and lonely years," Mandela explained, "my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness... For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others" (1995, 624).

In a remarkable moment, Mandela and F.W. de Klerk, the president of the apartheid government, were honored together with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their global example of collaborative leadership. In 1994, when Mandela was 75 years old, he voted for the first time in his life, in South Africa's first-ever democratic election. The African National Congress won the election, and Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first democratically elected President. He chose to serve only one term and devoted the rest of his life to humanitarian work for the poor, education for children, and the HIV/AIDS crisis.

In his writings and speeches, Mandela presented his "collective leadership" conviction, which expresses the virtue of unconditional love, characterizing a noble and humanitarian mindset:

- Look for what unites instead of what divides.
- Avoid humiliating others. When you must correct the mistakes of another person, always also point out the positive side to the person, allowing him or her to "save face."
- Treat everyone with respect and graciousness, and their inherent goodness will become apparent to you.
- Appeal to the noble qualities within your opponents. Point out how the oppressive system is crippling everyone and will lead to the violent demise of both sides unless forces are joined to save the country.
- Do not view other individuals as your enemy. They may not even agree with the racist system they are working for. See the system as the common enemy.
- Give people a chance to voice their standpoint and where it comes from. Listen patiently and ask questions. Do not criticize, even if you think the views are wrong.
- Cultivate collective leadership by noting the contributions and strengths of others. Do what you can to support others in the expression of their talents.
- Be humble and others won't feel threatened by you.
- Use your brain not your emotions when dealing with anger. Your blood might be boiling over what was done to you, but those feelings have to be set aside in the efforts for a peaceful resolution, or else the slaughter on both sides will continue.

We see from the examples of Gandhi and Mandela that unconditional love has the power of vision for a unifying solution, because love knows the inviolability of interdependence and works for the whole.

### **Love in Everyday Life**

The pioneering book by Dr. David R. Hawkins, *Power vs. Force*, not only discusses the philosophies of Gandhi, Mandela, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and other "great souls." The book also demonstrates that love is the most transformative energy field in every dimension of life work, business, education, the arts, politics, creativity, sports, and home life. It shows how every person can be a radiation of positive change in the world, no matter how ordinary their place in life might be. Love is an energy, not a role or even an action. "Love is a way of being," he told me. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D., (1927-2012) was a world-renowned psychiatrist and clinical scientist. At age 38, he underwent a profound transformation of consciousness that totally altered his life. Though he had been an atheist, he was given unexpected and direct experiences of the "Infinite Presence" and "All-Encompassing Divine Love" (his terms). This transformed consciousness led to the formulation of a body of work on the nature of consciousness and the founding of Devotional Nonduality, a spiritual path which integrates the great Yogas of heart, mind, and service. Hawkins received numerous awards in medicine, as well as global recognition for his humanitarian contributions. Buddhists in South Korea, for example, designated him "Tae Ryoung Sun KakTosa" (Teacher of Enlightenment). He was also nominated for the prestigious Templeton Prize, first given to Mother Teresa. In *Power vs. Force*, he demonstrates the scientifically and clinically grounded existence of a range of "energy fields," wherein unconditional love is one of the most potent on the planet. Indeed, he writes that a single person who lives on the level of love counterbalances the negativity of many hundreds of thousands of people. Any person can reach this level of love, but it requires humility and intense dedication to surrender all inner negativity and to realize the presence of love in ordinary life.

When I interviewed Hawkins at his home in Arizona (USA), he emphasized the power of love in everyday life: "A place to start is to love that you are, that you exist, and to be grateful for your existence. We bring more love into our lives simply by consciously focusing on its presence as a motivator in everyday life. For example, the love involved in making the family dinner, in cleaning the kitty boxes, in going to work to pay the bills. Ordinary endeavors, done out of love, carry great power. A dinner made with love makes a difference for the family. It makes a difference in how one experiences life.

The Olympiad who runs out of love for his country has a more positive experience than the one who runs to win for himself. Love as a motivator has great power to it. During the war - I was in the Navy on a mine sweeper - we did things out of love for our shipmates that we wouldn't have done otherwise. That is love as a bond of unity. It is fraternal love. There is also maternal love, which is the willingness of the mother to sacrifice for her child. Lovingness as a way of being expresses itself in all of these ways."

When asked to define love, he spoke of it as an ever-present energy field, not as an emotion. He said, "Love is an energy field that is available everywhere all the time. People think of love primarily as affection, as in 'Honey' and 'Sweetheart.' They tend to think of being 'in love' and romantic love. In reality, romance is a minor portion of one's life experience. Yes, a big love affair at age 18 is overwhelming! But most of life involves other expressions of love: love of family, love of friends, love of pets, love of home, love of possessions, love of health, love of ideals, love of values, love of country, love of purpose, etc. In everyday life, most of our friends and activities are all occurring in the field of love, but it isn't romantic love. There is actually an invisible, all-encompassing energy field of Love that surrounds everyone and everything."

In discussing the difficulty of facing hateful acts, Hawkins recommended this inner prayer: "Forgive the one in me who has ever done this or *could* do this." He said, "Love is the ultimate law of the universe," and therefore I was impressed to presume that all of life's events facilitate the evolution of consciousness toward love, even if the ego-centric mind cannot know the cosmic purpose behind a tragic event. In other words, difficulties present the opportunity to see the truth of a situation, however unpleasant, while also refining the quality of love. Hawkins emphasized the importance of loving without being naive. "You can love the tiger but don't be naive and forget that it will eat you if it's hungry!" He often referred to the Arab proverb and hadith, "Trust in God, but tie your camel." In other words, love remains hopeful yet avoids wishful thinking. He cited the example from World War II wherein the wishful thinking and credulity of British Prime Minister Chamberlain had devastating consequences. Chamberlain took Adolf Hitler at his word that he was interested in a peace agreement. Failing to acknowledge that he was face-to-face with a hungry tiger, Chamberlain was duped. Hitler promised that, if given certain territories, he would not invade others. They signed the Munich Agreement in 1938, and Chamberlain returned to Britain proudly lauding "the peace for our time." Within a year, as bombs rained down on the U.K., he was seen as a fool for having believed in the integrity of a totalitarian Hitler. Hitler had never intended to honor the agreement and probably scoffed at Chamberlain's wishful thinking. The challenge is to sustain the practice of unconditional love while simultaneously seeing the truth of the situation. The Trojan Horse phenomenon is ever present in the world today.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama offers an example of discerning wisdom. As the young leader of the Tibetan people, he was invited by Chairman Mao to China to view the industrial "progress." Mao said this new economic edge would "help" Tibet move into the future. The Dalai Lama was very impressed by Mao's social vision and way of speaking. But, in one critical moment, he saw through the façade of harmony and goodwill and "progress" to the real intention. Mao leaned over and said with disdain, "Of course, religion is poison!" The Dalai Lama was stunned and disappointed. He said his whole face became piercingly hot - the body's instinctual response to threat. He realized that Maoism was no friend to Tibet, despite many claims. Discernment is the capacity to see things as they really are, not as one would like them to be. It is normal to want to minimize a threat. Who wants to live in fear? The challenge is to face the threat realistically but also avoid acting out of fear. True peace comes as a result of truth.

Facing the truth begins with oneself. When I interviewed Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo at the DGL Nunnery which she founded in India, she highlighted the Buddhist teaching of self-awareness. The first western nun to complete a solitary retreat in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (12 years in a Himalayan cave), Palmo is esteemed worldwide for her steadfast commitment to advance women's spiritual opportunities. For Palmo, the problem of hatred and violence has to be addressed "from the inside" of human beings. Human thoughts "pollute" the world far more than toxic waste. The "light" of awareness from a single individual who has done the inner work makes a big difference in the world at large. She told me:

"The reason the world is in such a horrible state today is not the world's fault! It's the fault of the beings that inhabit the world - and not the lions and the tigers, but the humans! The world is run by people with polluted minds. We have a very polluted planet, and it all starts with the mind. We are projecting so much thought pollution, which is far worse than the other pollution everyone is concerned about. If we could see it, we would see that this planet is in very bad shape because of the amount of violence, hate, greed, and envy. It is emanating not only from the individuals but also from movies, television, and newspapers."

Palmo continued, "So, any Light that shines into darkness is bound to be very radiant because of how dark it is. It's like weeding the garden. You water good plants and you pull out the weeds. That way, gradually, the mind begins to un-pollute. Then one's speech will reflect one's thoughts, and one's actions will flow from there -- with more skill, more clarity, and based on a good heart instead of a polluted heart. It's obvious. People always try to change things on the outside. They don't understand that it has to start from the inside."

Each moment, if people are conscious to it, brings the opportunity to be aware of themselves and to "weed the garden" of envy, futility, hatred, and greed. To choose love and affirm life. To encourage rather than criticize. To befriend rather than isolate. To augment the positive rather than look for faults. The choice presents itself in every moment of every day: Do I hold onto bitterness, revenge, and judgment? Or do I choose to see with eyes of compassion so that something new can be born into human consciousness?

### **The Shadow of Hatred**

Terrorism had a traumatizing effect in my hometown. The roads were blocked off, helicopters circled for days, and we were told to stay indoors and be vigilant. Even now that the immediate aftermath has passed, the underlying unease has not gone away. Movie theaters, restaurants and religious services are emptier than usual. A siren goes by, and people look at each other with dread: "Did it happen again?" "Are you okay?" is the greeting, and "Stay safe" is the good-bye. The times demand discernment, which is characteristic of wisdom and not predicated on judgmentalism. Wisdom sees the truth, free and clear of moral platitudes, ideology, emotions such as anger and revenge, political influences, stereotypes, fears, and wishful thinking. It calls a spade a spade, even while it holds out the hope for a heart. It neither vilifies nor mollifies. Discernment and wisdom are the complement to compassion. With compassion, we understand that the human mind is vulnerable to propaganda and desperation.

How to prevent outbreaks of hatred? The most important "surveillance" to be done is on one's own individual psyche. As Carl Jung noted at the rise of the Nazi slaughter, we human beings are our own worst enemies. The primary danger to humanity is our own unconscious shadow. The projection of this repressed shadow onto an "outer enemy" is the foundation of all hatred, fear, and violence. According to Jung, human beings have a "personal shadow" and a "collective shadow." The personal shadow is comprised of all that is unwanted and rejected in ourselves, all the parts of a personality that were repressed in order to fit in with family, school, peers, work, culture, religion. When a person is not aware, these despised elements are projected onto others, and then hatred and vilification arise. The collective shadow of hatred is much more forceful "archetypal" and contains transpersonal energies of intense negativity constellated in the Western psyche, for example, by symbols such as "the snake," concepts such as "the devil," and totalitarian figures such as Hitler who purposefully manipulate collective fear and hatred for their own megalomaniac ends. Puritanical religious beliefs constellate a negative collective shadow of hatred for "sin" and "sinners." The execution of "witches" and Quakers in the early Puritan colonies is an example, as is the genocide of Native Americans. Each country has its own history of this puritanical shadow dynamic. Jung said the collective shadow "is best understood as a principle like evil." We ignore it to our peril, which is what occurred with Hitler's Nazism in Jung's own time. Jung writes (1981, 322):

"It is the colossal shadow thrown by man, of which our age had to have such a devastating experience. It is no easy matter to fit this shadow into our cosmos. The view that we can simply turn our back on evil and in this way eschew it, belongs to the long list of antiquated naiveties. This is sheer ostrich policy and does not affect the reality of evil in the slightest."

Therefore, Jung said, the most important individual political act is to face our own "dark side." Hatred lurks in the shadows of the unconscious psyche. We must face it in ourselves and then we will see it clearly in the collective also. If we are not conscious of our shadow hatreds, then we are vulnerable to becoming entrained by ideologies such as the one that possessed Malik and Farook. As much as we limit access to guns, as many troops as we send over to stop the terrorists, we still have the responsibility to face and dispel the hatred in our own consciousness. It is human consciousness that pulls the trigger. To own one's shadow is to withdraw the projection of it onto others. This depth work takes many years. It requires dedication to a verified spiritual path and/or work with a Jungian analyst or comparable guidance. Few people are willing to work on themselves in this way, for the shadow comprises all that they reject and dread seeing in themselves. It is easier to hate Obama, hate Trump, hate ISIS, hate the Christians, hate the Muslims, hate homosexuals, hate one's boss, hate one's father and mother, hate America, etc. Each of these hatreds leads to the harming of self and others.

According to the spiritual leaders interviewed for this article, the key is compassion. Compassion is what unlocks the door to true awareness of self and others. It is compassion for the innocence of the human being. People cannot help that they were "programmed" as children with beliefs and attitudes that are harmful to themselves and others. It may seem impossible to accept such a statement, yet Viktor Frankl proved that it is possible to affirm human innocence even in the case of horrific suffering. Frankl was a famous Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist who founded logotherapy ("healing through meaning"). In his bestselling book about the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, *Man's Search for Meaning*, he wrote, "No man should judge unless he asks himself in absolute honesty whether in a similar situation he might not have done the same" (2006, 48). Though he lost his wife, mother and father in the concentration camps, he did not lay personal blame on the people who joined the Nazi party, for he knew that he might have done the same thing had he been in their shoes. When I interviewed Frankl's grandson, Alexander Vesely, he emphasized Frankl's choice to focus on the innate potential for good within others:

"Although my grandfather Viktor Frankl struggled to have faith in humankind after the war, he ended up, in logotherapy, affirming a theory of humanity that seeks to elicit the potential for good and for meaning. He would always assume the best in others, even those who assumed the worst about him. This is a basis in his theory of logotherapy to look for the best in people. He would say, 'If you take a man as he *is*, you make him worse. If you take a man as he *can* be, you help him become who he can be, the best version of who he is.' And, of course, he meant women too he used the language of the time. He was not interested in the worst version of anyone and how we can analyze that. My grandfather focused in on the best version of you and acted as if you were already there. This had an uplifting effect on people. Still, he wasn't stupid, he wasn't one-sided. I want to be clear that he didn't deny the horrors of humanity. How could he? He had come out of the worst savagery. He would say: 'After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips.' There's a Hitler and a Mother Teresa in all of us, he would say. And it's a personal decision which of the two we're going to let ourselves become."

### Choosing Love

The take-home message of the leaders interviewed here is that human beings can choose the path of unconditional love or choose the path of denial, resentment, hatred, and ignorance. They emphasized that small acts of kindness make a beneficial imprint within the collective consciousness. This is because simple acts of kindness cause little backlash. In the current climate of divisive rhetoric and "taking sides," large-scale and ideologically driven proposals tend to be more polarizing than resolving. Whatever political avenue that people choose, it is important to remember that there is great power in works of love. Small acts of kindness may seem insignificant, but they are not. It may seem unimportant to forgive someone who slights us at work, but it is not. "Do small things with great love," said Mother Teresa. Because of the interconnectedness of all of life, everything that people do, think, and hold in their hearts radiates out to the whole. They do not have to be a newscaster or presidential candidate or CEO or movie star or author to influence the course of world events. Each person has an equal part in what becomes of the world. The ego glamorizes certain positions as "important" and "influential," but love sees the absolute equality of everyone's contribution. In daily interactions, this means to be more present with family members. Listening to a friend with an open heart. Bearing witness to the suffering nearby, without numbing or turning away. Caring for pets, animals and plant life. Staying awake to the love all around, in the form of trees, family, neighbors, friends, animals, air, water, gravity. Looking for ways to augment beauty and nurture life. It can happen in the simplest ways. When Nelson Mandela was in prison, he planted tomato seeds in a trash can. Over time, he had a tomato vine full of tomatoes, and he gave them to the prison guards and their families. As David Hawkins said, "Love is a way of being in the world."

If human beings have the inner discipline to steer clear of fear and see current difficulties as an opportunity for wisdom and compassion, this will place the global situation on a different plane of meaning and possibility. Even war, if it is one's inevitable circumstance, can be held from a noble standpoint of valor, which is a quality of love. Sadly, war has characterized most of human history and there is no immediate end in sight. At best, it is viewed as an inevitable, temporary "lesser evil" in the fight against forces such as slavery, terrorism, and Nazism. For certain people whose destiny it is to be warriors, there is the spiritual opportunity to approach the circumstance with an inner choice to do one's duty out of love. The soldiers or law enforcement officers who approach their duty with a sense of valor, love for country, and love for others is of a different caliber than the one who hates the enemy and exploits others.

This kind of valorous service was seen in the San Bernardino shooting, when one of the officers from the sheriff's department, Jorge Lozano, told the terrified people he was escorting to safety, "I'll take a bullet before you do, that's for damn sure." The video-recording went viral on the internet. He told reporters afterwards, "I meant what I said. I don't feel like a hero whatsoever. That's our job: to put ourselves in the line of danger to protect the community" (*L.A. Times*, 2015).

Sometimes circumstances bring a "forced compromise" with a pacifistic ideal, and this can be painful and disappointing. But in such cases, human beings are responsible for their own inner approach. Their heartfelt intention is what matters, such that even war, when inevitable as a "lesser evil" in the "real world of politics," can be held "as an opportunity for worldwide mutual compassion and forgiveness, which is the real road to Peace" (Hawkins, 2005, 325). Love does not ever laud war or suffering for its own sake, but, when forced to face war and suffering, it does so with courage. This kind of courage is epitomized by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl whose memoir of concentration camp life, *Man's Search for Meaning*, testifies to the greatness of the human spirit when under the most degrading, torturous conditions. When Viktor Frankl's grandson, Alexander Vesely, came to the University of Redlands to screen his documentary film, *Viktor and I*, a member of the film audience asked, "Why did Frankl say to pursue suffering?" Vesely replied, "My grandfather never lauded suffering as something that one should pursue. He said that 'IF' your destiny includes suffering, then it is incumbent on you to extract every bit of meaning out of it that you can. To transform a tragedy into an inner triumph."

This meaning-based philosophy has a parallel in Quranic tradition, where one finds the teaching, "Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God." Therefore, one welcomes all that life brings, judging it neither good nor bad. When I interviewed Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Sufi teacher in the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Sufi Order and founder of the Golden Sufi Center, he affirmed the beauty of our "real nature," that we are "made through love." He told me:

"Spiritual love, by its very nature, is unconditional. If it's not unconditional, then it's not love because love is free, without condition, given as a gift. It is very powerful, and it changes you. Completely. It reveals who you really are. Rûmî says, "You return to the root of the root of your real self." Human beings are incredibly beautiful. It is what we cover ourselves with that hides this from ourselves. Sufism is a process of unveiling through love. You unveil to discover the real nature of the human being, and all human beings are incredibly beautiful because we are made through love, made in the image of God. The tragedy, of course, is that we can't see it."

I asked Vaughan-Lee, "Where is love in the suffering of the world? How can there be light when there is so much darkness?" He replied, "I would say first to value the experience that you have. Don't judge it. Shakespeare said, 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' And the Sufis say, 'Everything is sweet, if you taste it with care.' Sufi training is not to judge the experience but to say, 'Everything comes from God.' It is how to live with the experience that life gives you. For example, suffering can contact you. It can draw you back into ego, into resentment, into bitterness. Or it can open you--make you aware of a deeper dimension of love. Love is not about what you want it is about what love wants."

"Love is not about what you want; it is about what love wants." This statement underscores the selflessness inherent in all of the theological systems presented in this article: Christian, Sufi, Hindu, and Buddhist. Each of the religious leaders stated that the goal of unconditional love is to be of service to the demand of love rather than to the personal ego. Mother Teresa put the point clearly when she said, "to be a pencil in the hand of God." I close the article with a summary of statements gleaned from the many years of interviewing religious leaders around the world on the topic of unconditional love:

- Stay aligned with the core principle of the innate dignity of all people, endowed by Divinity with inalienable rights.
- Avoid getting swept up in emotionally reactive political debates. Instead, envision and pray for the emergence of a humanistic and realistic approach.
- Support local efforts in your own community that promote genuine dialogue and loving kindness. Be clear that small acts of kindness and caring do much to transform a community.
- Infuse your work, whatever it may be, with a spirit of service and sense of meaning.
- Become conscious of your own shadow so that there is a transformation of the inner unconscious negativities of anger, fear, judgment, apathy, arrogance, and insecurity. This inner work is a critical matter of "national security."
- Accept that you cannot change other people. The only world you can ever truly change is your own inner world.

- But, paradoxically, by changing yourself, you change the world. This is because the oneness of life is inviolable. "Every hair is counted," and no act or thought goes unnoticed.
- Love your life as a gift, even though you do not always understand why it is the way it is.
  - Know that the presence of a small group of people devoted to love outweighs the negativity of hatred, fear, apathy, greed, and pride operating in the world at large.
  - Do not doubt that the path of unconditional love serves all of humanity by the dedication to transcend every illusion of separateness. Much like the rising of the sea level lifts all ships, so the radiance of unconditional love within a human heart lifts all of life.

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